Populisms: Inherently Illiberal or Plausibly Democratic? Hybrid Regimes May Offer a Complementary Approach Jaime A. Preciado Coronado

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Abstract

The central question of this paper is whether a constructive relationship between populism and democratisation may exist, or whether all types of populism inevitably lead to illiberal regimes. Anglo-Saxon and Eurocentric traditions tend to identify populism with fascism, as in the case of authoritarian right-wing regimes, or with left-wing politics as in the case of socialist or communist systems that produce totalitarian regimes. Critical theorists consider populism to be a reaction to a perceived gap separating democratic institutions from the popular sovereignty from which political regimes derive their legitimacy. This paper examines populisms from three main perspectives: (1) negative views of populism from a liberal democracy perspective; (2) positive views from theorists who see populism as a legitimate expression of popular sovereignty; and (3) some ways in which populism may be viewed based on Leonardo Morlino's definition of a hybrid regime and the experiences of several Latin American countries.

Keywords

Democratisation; Hybrid Regime; Illiberal Regimes; Political Theory; Populism

Introduction¹

The causes and results of populist movements vary widely depending on the contexts in which they come into being and progress. In European countries, populism has been associated with fascist, authoritarian and far-right politics as well as with leftist, socialist or communist regimes of a totalitarian nature. In such contexts, political parties and leaders essentially hijack the concept of "the people" and attempt to monopolize it as a way of legitimizing the illiberal nature of their regimes.

Should populism be given serious consideration within the field of political science? According to Margaret Canovan (1999), populisms, as phenomena that call upon social sectors against dominant power structures and ideas, are more than pathological forms of politics, and, thus, require a closer attention from the researcher. In this sense, Ernesto Laclau (2005) considers populism as a possible reaction to the perceived distancing of democratic systems and institutions from the popular sovereignty that is the source of their legitimacy. This may occur due to challenges that are inherent to "popular" representation, which necessarily entails the delegation of public power to professional politicians. The gap between "popular" representation and "the people" as a collective social body is thus filled by populism, which offers discursive solutions that appear to support the aspirations of "the people" with respect to the political system under which they live.

Modern liberal democracies for which the nation state is the authentic and legitimate expression of popular and national sovereignty must balance the individual rights of every citizen against popular sovereignty, the latter of which is an expression of the general interest and common good. Under populism, a political regime may deem that the interests of one part of society represent the general interest and by extension popular sovereignty.

Nonetheless, critical views of populism do not account for situations in which certain populist movements exist as a legitimate expression of popular sovereignty that might have otherwise gone unexpressed. This can be claimed in the case of a number of left-leaning movements such as the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, the rise of Evo Morales in Bolivia and Spain's *Podemos* political party.

In view of the foregoing, I will discuss populism from three perspectives: (1) liberal democratic views of populism put forward by theorists such as Gianfranco Pasquino, Pippa Norris and Giovanni Sartori that point to the negative effects it may have on democratic processes, including the promotion of illiberal regimes; (2) more supportive multidimensional views of populism from writers such as Ernesto Laclau, Enrique Dussel,

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Jacques Rancière and Chantal Mouffe; and (3) an examination of Morlino's model of hybrid regimes vis-à-vis some Latin-American populist experiences, and how his typology may offer a useful perspective on populism and its possible roles in democratic systems.

Liberal democracy's critiques of populism

Even though there is not necessarily a clear distinction between approaches to populism that adopt favorable or critical stances, I suggest that a conceptual distinction can be made between Anglo-Eurocentric democratic liberal theories and political theories with epistemological origins in the Global South. To examine perspectives of a more critical nature, I have chosen three respected political authors: Gianfranco Pasquino, Giovanni Sartori and Pippa Norris².

Gianfranco Pasquino: populism is at odds with democracy

Rejective characterisations of populism can be found in a number of Gianfranco Pasquino's writings. In *Populism and Democracy* (2008), he differentiates between liberal democracy and populism, with a particular focus on how power is sought and accessed: "In liberal democracy, the mode of access tends to be controlled by institutional procedures and intermediate associations, while in populist democracy the mode of access tends to be more direct and rampant" (Kornhauser 1959, 131, in Pasquino 2008, 20).

Pasquino (2008, 20) prefers the notion of mentalities over that of ideologies in reference to populism, by establishing that the populist mentality embodies the idea that "the people are always far better than their rulers and that rulers often betray the interests and preferences of the people." An adversarial dichotomy is thus described between elite ruling classes and the people. In association with this conflict, there are two aspects of political culture linked with populist mentalities: the rejection of politics and of political parties (Pasquino 2008, 21).

While populists may not oppose representative politics, their mind set assumes the elimination of intermediary actors and institutions, and the constitution of stronger links between the people and political leaders. According to Pasquino (2008), populisms expect to erase all agreements, struggles, alliances and commitments that are characteristic to traditional politics, promoting a direct relationship between politicians and the people; thus, adding legitimacy and strength to their decision-making powers.

What variables explain the ascent of populism? Pasquino (2008) observes the anomie and despair often present in mass society as a fertile breeding ground. In the face of non-

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² I do not intend to present a state-of-the-art assessment of literature on the topic of populism, but to highlight three proposals of liberal democratic views given the authors' influence on political science thought.

existent sturdy horizontal ties between peers, charismatic leaders emerge and exploit the tendency to trust vertical ties with a leader who offers a sense of belonging within a community of meaning.

Other factors that contribute to the flourishing of populism are socioeconomic crises and the anxiety of identity loss that such crises may trigger. Job instability, apparent threats from foreign immigrants, or the perspective of an uncertain future can nourish fidelity to a populist leader who offers social stability and whose remedies seem to provide "certainty". These leaders identify those they hold to be enemies as "scapegoats" and blame them for whatever hardships the people experience.

Pasquino's (2008, 28) negative view of populism becomes clear when he depicts a political culture whose discourse, while claiming to defend the principles of democracy, can lead "under some circumstances and through a distorted manipulated implementation, to populist recipes, claims, outcomes." As Pasquino (2008, 28) states, populisms produce negative consequences in democracy:

The followers of populist leaders put an exaggerated amount of faith in them and will often continue to believe that any and all improvements of their plight may only come from the action of a leader endowed with extraordinary qualities. Second, the cohesion of the populist movement is essentially granted, and consolidated, by the identification, opposition and, in most cases, hostility directed against particular enemies: the Establishment, the politicians, the financiers of globalization, the technocrats, the immigrants, i.e. 'those who are not like us.'

Pasquino (2008, 29) does not shut the door tothe possibility that populism may aid to democratisation when it happens withinhybrid political regimes. However, he warns that this "requires time, patience and a great deal of institutional wisdom." Furthermore, he concludes that there are no recorded cases of successful institutionalisation of a populist movement or experiment.

Giovanni Sartori: populism is antithetical to democracy

Although there is no systematic treatment of populism in Giovanni Sartori's work, some of his writings can be interpreted as casting populism in a negative light. One example is his book *Il Sultanato* (Sartori 2009), a collection of articles printed in the Italian newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*, in which he is openly critical of the government of Silvio Berlusconi and calls out the Italian president's populist contempt for representative democracy.

In spite of concurrent democratic crises that signal an erosion of the public sphere of trust between the government and the population, and a perceived deterioration of the legitimacy of the government's decisions if they are taken without any consultation of the public will, Sartori (2009) distrusts using popular consultations to resolve matters normally handled through parliamentary channels and doubts that such consultations lead to more effective democracy.

Sartori (2009) is concerned with preserving political pluralism within the framework of a democracy that represents popular sovereignty and does not recognise distinctions based on cultural differences for which some groups may demand recognition. He believes that democracy should not opt for a self-destructive path where the principle of majority rule in parliamentary and presidential elections may be compromised by means of plebiscitary consultations.

Such ideas are part of the debate between the ideals of representative liberal democracy and populist policy schemes that favor direct democracy, which Sartori distrusts. He is particularly concerned about situations in which majorities may enact policies that are abusive towards minorities and do not respect cultural diversity. He believes that in order to generate a climate of certainty and political stability, democracy requires the existence of a virtuous relationship between elites and ordinary citizens that involves checks and balances on power.

However, some criticism of the simplification of populism as an external threat can be found in Sartori (2009), who argued that, despite the triumph of liberal democracy over totalitarian or authoritarian regimes, populism is rooted within sub-national regions whose states are categorised as liberal democracies. This is the case of Italy's Lombardy region, where the hegemony of the conservative populist movement led by the Lombard League has influenced the sporadic formation of a populist national government for more than 25 years. Yet overall, Sartori sees populism as being naturally opposed to liberal democracy, and he envisions no role for populism in democratic processes. For him populism represents an institutional breakdown of representative democracy and tends to rely on rhetoric that ultimately establishes binary polarisations (friend/enemy; people/elite) in society that are not conducive to democratic coexistence.

Pippa Norris: democracy under threat

Pippa Norris, a leading political analyst of electoral processes worldwide, characterises populism as having three main dimensions (Norris, in Illing 2017). Firstly, it endeavors to "appeal to popular sovereignty over and above liberal democracy" on the grounds that "moral virtue and power should be with the ordinary people and not the elites". Secondly, it is inherently anti-establishment, which entails opposition not only to political and economic elites, but also to "intellectuals or journalists or other groups at the top of

society." Thirdly, Norris highlights the tendency for populist power to "reside in the individual leader, the charismatic leader who represents the voice of the ordinary people."

She acknowledges that while these three elements operate in unison, they do not provide a clear picture of what policies populists will enact. This lack of any predominant ideological categorisation "opens the door for a variety of leaders who have different ideologies, whether we're talking Hugo Chavez in Venezuela or Donald Trump in America." Norris (in Illing 2017). She characterises Trump's political leanings as being more authoritarian than right-wing, adding that authoritarian values include a "belief in a strong leader, in a strong state, and in robust law and order." (In Illing 2017). Authoritarianism also emphasises national unity and the protection of one's national community from those considered as outsiders based on nationality, ethnicity, or race. Populist progressives, like US senator and former presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, "employ similar rhetoric but they work out of a progressive agenda, not just in taxation like in Chavez in Venezuela, but also on other economic issues as well." (in Illing 2017).

She asserts that these populisms transcend the ideological dichotomy and may include economic redistribution via a strong welfare state and Keynesian economic prescriptions on the left, and the low-tax, free market and laissez-faire economic views of classical liberalism (neoliberalism) on the right.

Populist discourse, according to Norris (in Illing 2017), is succinct, direct and unafraid of being offensive or using "language that is seen as unacceptable by traditional politicians, and that's an appeal again that the leader is part of the everyman." This discourse does not focus on material needs, appealing instead "to a different set of values, equality, participation, democracy and a whole series of other post-material values" (in Illing 2017). This focus mirrors generational shifts in values in accordance with the more heterogeneous nature of the educational, cultural, gender and racial milieu found in many nation states. However, Fukuyama (2018) posits that negative perceptions of social changes may lead to a rise in identity politics, setting the stage for increased populism and doubts about the values inherent to liberal democracy.

Unlike Sartori, Norris (in Illing 2017) notes that the populist reaction against multiculturalism is a product of the widespread prevalence and inevitability of multiculturalism in an increasingly cosmopolitan world: "Social changes have accelerated multiculturalism, and that is perceived as threatening to those opposed to it. There are immense pressures to adapt and adopt."

According to her, there are three factors that may govern the impact of multiculturalism: 1) the degree of public attachment to or detachment from institutional rules and norms; 2) how political parties respond to institutional challenges among themselves; and 3) public acceptance or rejection of social and cultural changes (in Illing 2017).

Norris (in Illing 2017) believes that the greatest threats to western democracy come from populism and terrorism: "The two things go hand in hand and they feed on each other. They're mutually parasitic in some ways." She is nonetheless optimistic given the observation that some news organisations and legal systems have proven themselves capable of conferring resistance to populist excesses.

Positive perspectives on populism

Laclau and Mouffe: the utility of leftist populism

The writings of Ernesto Laclau offer a more optimistic view of populism. He holds that populism "is not an ideology, but a practical way of constructing the political" (Laclau 2014, 253). His model, based on a view of society as consisting of two main groups, calls on "those below" to mobilise against existing power holders. According to Laclau (2014), populism appears whenever the current social order is perceived as unjust, and the people take collective action to reconfigure the present order from the ground up.

For Laclau (2014), populism is a useful political tool not only for ordinary governance but also for defending the interests of those below. Under his populist theory, the people as a collective are opposed to the concept of elitist democracy as the political expression of a hegemonic majority.

Both Laclau and Mouffe (2015) insist that populism can be used by both the left and the right. While in Latin America, populist experiences have long existed in leftist movements, European populist experiences often have their origins in right-wing movements promoting forms of nationalism that include culturally exclusive and often xenophobic ideologies. These movements can be considered anti-democratic to the extent that such ideologies run contrary to the principle of popular sovereignty.

Regarding the relationship between leftist populism and socialism, Atilio Boron states that:

Socialism is not populism insofar as, unlike the latter, it must stimulate and favor the autonomous organisation of the popular classes and layers as well as the development of their revolutionary consciousness. We must not lose sight of the fact that promoting human capacities is not something that can be done overnight. What must be avoided is the appearance and crystallisation of passive and non-participatory attitudes, in such a way that

the population does not expect that all their problems to be resolved by the state (Boron 2014, 243).

As for right-wing populism, the recognised expert on fascism, Federico Finchelstein (2018), sees populism and fascism as two sides of the same coin. Laclau, however, draws a distinction between populism and fascism based on the writing of the political theorist (and former German Nazi Party member) Carl Schmitt, an author that Laclau cites to build his critical theory of populism. For Laclau, Schmitt's friend-enemy dichotomy, in which the enemy is "existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible" (Schmitt 1996, 27) can be a prelude to acts of deadly violence. For Laclau, Schmitt's characterisation of the "enemy" is patently fascist and undemocratic.

Chantal Mouffe, in her recent book (2019) points to European cases in which left-leaning populist politics has made inroads as in the case of Latin America. In this regard, she cites the examples of *Podemos* in Spain, France insoumise in France and the Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn in the United Kingdom. All of them have adopted new forms of dialogue between parties and the electorate based on a criticism of elitist democracy, a rejection of social inequality and criticism of all forms of authoritarian, socially exclusive and racist nationalism.

For his part, Coraggio and Laville (2014, 26) points out that "(t)he notion of populism is symptomatic. Accused of demagoguery, this call to the people without mediation is seen in Europe as a temptation (Ihl et al. 2003) or as an illusion (Taguieff 2002), often invoked to study the growth of the extreme right. Without a doubt accompanied by a recurring danger of Caesarism in Latin America, populism cannot, however, be separated from popular national processes and leftist governments (Laclau 2005)."

Faced with the threat of Caesarism or *caudillismo*, populism has the potential to make a positive contribution by encouraging the mass integration of people into the political arena. This is not to make the reductionist claim that populism produces genuine leaders and a democracy supported by the masses without taking into account the intermediary role of political parties and social movements.

Both Laclau and Mouffe (2015) consider that populism carries the risk of excessively centralising the power of the institutions in a way that diminishes the legitimate autonomous powers of national regions. It is not enough to establish institutional divisions of power or rules; they must be exercised in a way that fosters a virtuous relationship between parties, grassroots movements and government. It is a matter of analysing whether there is a sensible populist argument and enough people qualified to fill the political vacuum left by representative liberal democracy (Laclau 2005; Mouffe 2019).

Rancière and Dussel: liberation politics and criticism of populism

Rancière (2016) asserts that populism has the potential to generate a discourse that questions the insufficiencies of partisan representation and the dominance of de facto powers in liberal democracy. Populism thus contributes useful criticisms of elitist democracy by affirming that "governments and ruling elites are more concerned with their interests than with public affairs," while also admitting that certain authoritarian types of populism take refuge in an exclusive nationalism that is constructed through "an identity rhetoric that expresses the fear and rejection of foreigners."

This author (2016) does not believe that populism adheres to any particular political ideology or formal quality: "The term 'populism' cannot be tied to a specific political group [because it embodies] political forces that go from the extreme right to the radical left. Nor does it designate an ideology or even a coherent political style. It simply serves to create a representative image of a certain people." This author's views on populism include a critical perspective: that populism has both the potential to increase the power of the people given the massive numbers it can involve or to weaken it due to the collective ignorance that can come with such numbers.

Rancière (2016) questions the ability of populism to deliver popular sovereignty when majorities elect representative and autonomous governments that may use racist cultural and ideological devices to achieve authoritarian and nationalist ends. Under such scenarios, the "good" people justify their positions with appeals to nativism and white as well as to patriarchal supremacism. This racist identity feels threatened by ordinary people and sees the ruling class as traitors, as they do not understand the complexity of political mechanisms. Such people also view foreigners and the demographic, economic and social evolution they imply as a threat: populism easily combines feelings of hostility to rulers and animosity towards those considered as "others".

While Rancière's criticism focuses on the nationalist and racist authoritarian populist movements that are gaining traction in Europe, Dussel (2012) brings to light the positive potential of populist experiences in Latin America. His paper "Cinco tesis sobre el populismo" (Five theses on populism) defends the legacy left by major social movements in the region with regards to shaping a popular national agenda, the contribution of these movements to democratic governance through representative means of defending popular interests that exceed the traditional formats of liberal democracy, and their focus on the principle of majority rule.

Under his approach to politics based on the ideal of liberation, his first thesis (2012) emphasises anti-imperialist movements operating on the national level and seeks to legitimise the role of the left in the formation of new parties and leadership paradigms that meet popular demands to redress inequalities originating from the elitist forces that dominate liberal democracies. Dussel defends the legitimacy of populism to the extent that it has contributed to merging the ideal of popular sovereignty with actual government practices. He does not limit himself to analysing results achieved through democratic regimes, as he also highlights the contributions made by social movements that can be characterised as "popular" in nature.

In his second thesis, Dussel (2012, 178) denounces "the pejorative epithet of 'populism' that is used to denigrate opponents to the 'Washington Consensus', to neoliberalism, and that refers to popular, neo-nationalist Latin American governments that protect national wealth, which has been taking place since the late 20th century", with the so-called progressive governments.

The third thesis in his paper points out the differences and nuances that can be drawn between the concepts of "populism" and "popular", and where a horizon of meaning that regroups and creates the social dimension of populism can be found. Regarding "the people" as a collective term, Dussel includes a critical point of view of the narratives put forward by governments and social movements that evoke deliberative notions (constituents, popular consultations, plebiscites, referendums); these categories "must be constructed with greater precision, but not abandoned as being too complex" (Dussel 2012, 178).

Dussel's (2012) fourth thesis, points out some of the complex aspects of populism that challenge the prevailing political thought about it. The concept of "the people" is linked to the exercise of popular power through a political system that "creates new institutions of participation at all levels of political structures, in civil society and state politics, and constitutionally" (2012, 178). Real democracy is linked to the effective organisation of popular-political participation.

Lastly, his fifth thesis calls for reflection on and the theoretical integration of the controversial debate on leadership "to avoid traditional avant-garde or charismatic dictatorships, but also [to avoid] a certain kind of spontaneous populism, by demonstrating its importance and need, while at the same time explaining the democratic demands of its exercise" (Dussel 2012, 178). These five theses open a debate in which truth is not sought in absolute terms. Their aim is to contribute towards a discussion on the validity of positive perspectives on populism.

Populism and hybrid regimes

What remains is to examine the usefulness of Leonardo Morlino's concept of hybrid regimes in the interpretation of the types of populism mentioned above. Morlino's typology is suitable for the analysis of nation states with democratic regimes, but it does not deal with the influence of heterogeneous political cultures that have inspired the range of populisms present in the Latin American political history. Conservative populisms emerged as a reaction against progressive populisms which appeared around 1990 and were in a state of decay by 2015. According to Wilkin (2018, 316), in the case of progressive populism "the goals are broadly ones that promote universality in the form of a general improvement in the quality of people's lives. (...) has its intellectual antecedents in the legacy of Enlightenment thought. By reactionary I mean the tradition that emerged as the Anti-Enlightenment, which sought to promote the ideas of separation, particularism and ultimately ethno-nationalism as the basis for a social order and a political system." The Guardian (2019) published a study which identified the most prominent populist figures worldwide over the last 20 years. The Latin American leaders appearing in the study included Hugo Chávez (Venezuela, 1999-2007 and 2007-2013); Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela, 2013-2018); Evo Morales (Bolivia, 2006-2019); Rafael Correa (Ecuador, 2007-2017); Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua, 2007-2021); Alan García (Peru, 2006-2011); Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil, 2019-2023); and Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Mexico, 2018-2024). Not included were former Brazilian presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva nor Dilma Rousseff. Leaders were chosen for inclusion in the study based on the number of times populist ideas were mentioned in their official speeches.

According to Morlino's hybrid regime model, in the Latin American context 22 profiles can be identified between 1911 and 2019. Among the populist regimes that governed for more than ten years, eight cases can be found in Latin America (not including Cuba, given the highly exceptional nature of its regime): Getúlio Vargas (Brazil, 1930-1954); Víctor Paz Estenssoro (Bolivia, 1952-1964); Omar Torrijos (Panama, 1969-1981); Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua, 1979-1988 and 2017-2025); Hugo Chávez (Venezuela, 1999-2013); and Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela, 2013-2018 and 2018-2023). In Bolivia, Evo Morales was elected in 2006 and following his 2019 re-election he was deposed due to an electoral result dispute. Rafael Correa was the president of Ecuador between 2007 and 2017.

Morlino's theory would assume that these governments, after a period of more than ten years, could have transitioned to hybrids regimes. However, this analysis cannot ignore the fact that these countries' efforts to make liberal democracy and populism coexist have been affected by the influence of American policies, economic pressures and even intervention.

A hybrid regime is "a set of institutions that have been persistent, stable or unstable, for around a decade, have been preceded by authoritarianism, a traditional regime (possibly of a colonial nature) or even a minimal democracy; they are characterized by the emergence of pluralism and limited forms of independent and autonomous participation, but they lack at least one of the four characteristics of a minimal democracy" (Morlino 2019, 102). The stability of hybrid regimes can be attributed to factors such as the discontent, dissatisfaction, fear of poverty, and general democratic malaise that contribute to the delegitimisation of democratic systems and to the rise of populist systems. In these scenarios, the hybrid regime emerges as an acceptable institutional configuration that is characterised by being midway between authoritarianism and democracy.

The value of Morlino's model for Latin America "[...] is that it does not impose a rigid democratisation model – a situation that has led some authors to focus primarily on the gaps in the region's processes with respect to the models, which ends up not being highly explanatory – but a flexible framework in which the variables acquire their explanatory value based on their conceptual and empirical relevance" (Plancarte et al. 2019, 17).

The populist institutional configurations that arose in the 20th century were preceded by authoritarian and/or dictatorial regimes that gained power by means of military coups inspired by the US National Security Doctrine of the Cold War era. These populist movements have participated in presidential elections and promoted broad processes of peaceful political activity. They are critical of both elitist and minimal democratic systems, yet allow political pluralism and limited forms of independent and autonomous participation. However, these populist regimes experience issues related to the stability of government due to the atmosphere created around the frequent re-election campaigns of populist presidents and attempts by political and economic elites to vie for power. Another factor that has weakened Latin America's "progressive pink tide" in the 21st century is the rise of nationalist and authoritarian right-wing populisms that have obtained a degree of social support through legal maneuvers (lawfare) against presidential institutions, and through questionable electoral processes after which they gain institutional legitimacy.

Background to and current scenarios in the Latin American populist debate

The Getulio Vargas government ended in 1954 when the president committed suicide under pressure from the Brazilian Armed Forces, which were aligned with the US Cold War doctrine that played a role in the overthrow of democratically elected governments.

An unfortunate fate also befell Guatemalan president Jacobo Árbenz, who was deposed that same year by a military coalition supported by the CIA. Another center-left movement led by João Goulart, who governed Brazil between 1961 and 1964, could be classified as populist. As in the case of the two previously cited governments, his was ousted by the country's military with support from the US State Department. After 24 years of military dictatorship, a constitutional reform in 1988 finally opened the door to Brazilian democratisation, ushering in a period of frequent, transparent elections under the leadership of credible electoral bodies and with acceptance of the legitimacy of presidential election results.

The recent judicialisation of Brazilian politics (2017-2019), a phenomenon which had previously taken place in Paraguay (2012) and Honduras (2009), consisted of using the courts as means to carry out the persecution of or exact vengeance against political adversaries. These actions represented a perversion of constitutional mandates. Legitimate electoral processes were desecrated by a legal war that produced court cases aimed at resolving conflicts between elected political authorities and elites. Although the Labor Party had ruled for 14 consecutive years in Brazil, characterising that period as populist is dubious at best, given the existence of the 1988 constitution that brought the country more in line with a liberal democratic regime that bore little resemblance to Leonardo Morlino's definition of hybrid regimes.

On 4 November 1964, within the framework of the Cold War and the US National Security Doctrine, a coup d'état that imposed a military junta led by Air Force commander René Barrientos Ortuño took place in Bolivia. President Víctor Paz Estenssoro, who had been elected in May of that year for a third term, went into exile to Lima, Peru, although he returned to the presidency in 1985 and remained in office until 1989. Elected by a parliament dominated by center-left parties, and despite not having been the most-voted candidate, Paz took on the challenge of ruling during the "lost decade" (period of the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s) by implementing a populist program aimed at implementing stabilisation and pacification measures in a country where military juntas had often ruled via de facto regimes. It would not be until 2010 with the election of Evo Morales that the transition to a democratic regime in Bolivia would be consolidated. In 2019, the democratisation of the country was interrupted when the reelection of Evo Morales was disputed by established political groups. In November 2019, a de facto government was set up and subsequently organised the presidential elections of 2020. The victory of the Movimiento al Socialismo party, in October, marked a return to democracy and the reestablishment of a populist project whose political characteristics do not easily conform to Morlino's hybrid regime typology.

General Omar Torrijos took over the Panamanian government in 1969 following a military coup and established a regime in which the presidency was controlled by the country's army and national guard. This populist government was interrupted in 1981 when Torrijos died in a plane crash. The involvement of the CIA was suspected as a reaction to the Panamanian government's links with national liberation movements in Central America. Unlike former US president Jimmy Carter, who recognised the democratising drive of national liberation movements in some Central American countries, his successor, Ronald Reagan encouraged military interventionism in that region and imposed military juntas that would be friendly to then-nascent neoliberal aspirations. It was not until 1984, three years after Torrijos' death, that a democratic political regime with civilian control was established in Panama.

In 1979 the triumph of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in Nicaragua instituted a military junta, which later established a democratic transition, normalised electoral processes and guaranteed the peaceful transfer of power after elections. This process went on for nine years until the FSLN lost for three consecutive elections over a period covering 18 years, although it regained the presidency in 2007. Since then, a competitive party-based regime, under which Daniel Ortega has occupied the Nicaraguan presidency since 2007, has been implemented. His re-election for a third consecutive term on 6 November 2016 with 72.4 % of the votes, according to official figures from the Supreme Electoral Council, has been called into question due to an abstention rate of approximately 70 %. Indefinite consecutive reelection is a controversial issue in Latin American populist regimes. In Nicaragua, Ortega lowered the percentage necessary to win a presidential election in the first round from 45 % to 35 % of the votes, a move that many believe has helped him win reelection, particularly in 2006. Social discontent against what the opposition to Ortega has called his "populist authoritarianism" has risen since 2018. Recent repression against dissidents has resulted in more than 500 fatalities, an ominous figure that weighs heavily on the prospects for the continuance of Ortega's democratic governance. Accusations of nepotism were also leveled at him after his wife, Rosario Murillo, ran as a vice-presidential candidate in his most recent reelection campaign.

Populism, beyond hybrid regimes

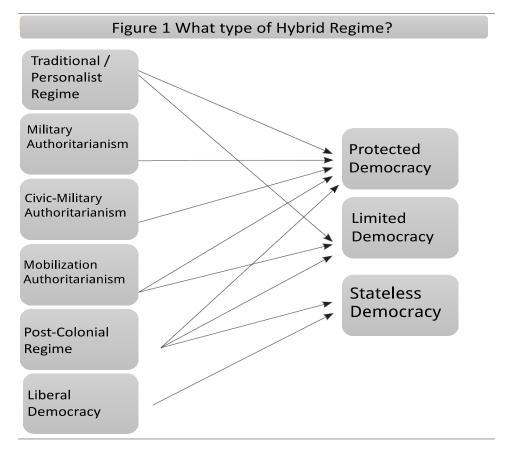
The terms "regime", "authoritarianism" and "democracy" frame Morlino's (2019, 89-90) vision of the hybrid regime, which "is intimately linked with the prospects for change in the nations that have such ambiguous forms of organisation and, more generally, with the spread of democratisation." According to the 2007 Freedom House Report on which

Morlino (2019) bases his analysis, 60 of the world's 193 independent countries, accounting for 30 % of global population, have "political configurations that can be defined as partially free, the criterion most closely tied to the notion of hybrid regimes". While the 2007 report focused on medium- and small-sized nations, in 2020 some populist governments in large countries such as India and Brazil, and even the United States, could also fit into the "partially free" category, as they were all home to forms of populism with increasingly authoritarian features. Furthermore, if we widen the perspective to include populist sociopolitical movements that are non-governmental, in the sense that they operate as advocacy groups in legislative or civil society contexts, the topic of hybrid regimes begins to appear more complex.

Populism cannot easily be slotted into Morlino's typology of hybrid regimes. While some countries may definitely be categorised within this typology, the reach of populism as a political and cultural phenomenon goes beyond the concept of a political regime. According to *The Guardian* (2019), "(i)n the early 2000s, Venezuela, Argentina, and Italy were the only countries with populations over 20 million with populist leaders. The populist club increased significantly between 2006 and 2009, when Ecuador's Rafael Correa, Bolivia's Evo Morales, and the Czech Republic's Mirek Topolánek came to power – and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russia's Vladimir Putin began using populist rhetoric". *The Guardian's* (2019) study of populist rhetoric and discourse found that the most significant expansion of populism has occurred over the past five years, "when more populists came to power in central and eastern Europe, and the elections of Donald Trump, India's Narendra Modi, Mexico's Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro put populists in power in some of the world's most populous countries." As a result, the study states that the number of people living in a country led by a leader who is at least "somewhat populist" increased from 120 million in 2002 to more than 2 billion in 2019.

Morlino's (2109, 92-93) conception of the hybrid regime envisages something between a "non-democratic arrangement (particularly of a traditional, authoritarian or post-totalitarian nature) and a democratic one". His analysis focuses on institutions, "even if they are not formal, which exist at a given time and in a given nation; such institutions continue to have remnants of previous political scenarios. [A hybrid regime] may not meet the minimalist requirements of a democracy [nor] satisfy all the immediately controllable and empirically essential conditions that make it possible to establish a limit beyond which a regime cannot be considered to be democratic".

In Figure 1, Morlino (2019, 112) identifies six types of hybrid regimes: 1) Traditional, personalistic; 2) Military authoritarianism; 3) Civil-military authoritarianism; 4) Mobilising authoritarianism; 5) Postcolonial regime; and 6) Liberal democracy. These regimes interact with three types of democracy: 1) Protected democracy; 2) Limited democracy; and 3) Stateless democracy. Given the length of this article, it is not possible to cover all the concepts that are included in the typology that this author proposes. However, the typologies of authoritarian regimes and democracies cited above allow me to emphasise those factors that make democratic change possible or difficult, within the framework of the six hybrid regimes and the way they interrelate with the three types of democracy. Positioning populist regimes within this typology is no easy task. Despite the risk of simplification, Morlino's work aims to reflect on this typology as it relates to populist experiences in Latin America.



Source: Morlino (2019, 112)

A protected democracy is defined by its ability to continue operating for a considerable or for a very long period of time. To have any chance of permanence, such a political hybrid must be able to rely on both political and social institutional elites, and be capable of taking measures that limit mass participation. However, a populist regime cannot be considered a protected democracy, since their representation of the people corresponds to an elitist conception of democracy that privileges and protects their interests. Furthermore, we must not lose sight

of the "significant void" (Laclau 2005) which populism aims to fill in either of its two iterations: the authoritarian one, with an appeal to nativist nationalism and white, patriarchal supremacy; and the progressive one, with an appeal to nationalism that favors an inclusive *us*, devoid of racism and supportive of feminist and gender equality ideals.

A *limited democracy* is associated to a "rupture of authoritarianism as a result of popular mobilisation of groups in society or of the armed forces, or due to foreign intervention. [...] The presence of undemocratic veto players [may lead to] a more or less enduring situation, characterised by the lack of guarantees of order and basic rights" (Morlino 2019, 114). Latin American populisms are anchored in popular mobilisations, within which the degree of participation of the armed forces has varied considerably: Hugo Chávez in Venezuela and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua arose from military backgrounds, while Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador entered politics as civilians and later gained the support of the armed forces.

All progressive populist leaders come from social movements, and the dominant tendency is for them to strengthen a civilian presidential regime supported by a more or less pluralistic party system. Jair Bolsonaro, who has a military background, is an example of an authoritarian populist elected with the help of Brazil's liberal democratic sectors. At the same time, his close ties to the country's armed forces afford him a considerable degree of political stability, although this situation creates a scenario where the military ends up having undemocratic veto power. In Latin America, the existence of military or civil-military authoritarian regimes has often gone hand in hand with foreign interventionism. In the cases of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, authoritarian regimes eventually led to liberal democratic transitions. On the other hand, in countries such as Bolivia, Evo Morales led to a populist democratic transition with the capacity to hold the political influence of the armed forces in check for more than 10 years, until 2019 when the army became a veto player who failed to accept the results of that year's presidential election.

The third type of regime is the *stateless democracy* (Morlino 2019, 114), which "does not even imply the liberalisation or disintegration of limited pluralism as such, since there is no previously existing stable regime or a functioning state institution." According to Morlino, the democracies without law (in which there is neither personal autonomy nor individual liberties), as well as the inefficient democracies, can be grouped into the category of stateless democracies (Morlino 2019, 114-117). The majority of such systems are in Africa and Asia; there are none in Latin America. However, populisms do not fit this definition since this

hybrid regime is characterised by the absence of the rule of law and by the denial of personal autonomy and individual liberties.

Morlino's asserts that "hybrid regimes are a substantial reality and can be considered an autonomous model of regime with respect to democracy, authoritarianism and the traditional regime" (2019, 20-21). Morlino's typology offers an empirical classification of hybrid regimes which is based on Weberian ideal types, useful for testing the empirical establishment of minimum indicators of effective democracy, and, thus, discerning the extent to which both authoritarian and democratic aspects prevail in hybrid regimes.

All hybrid regimes are challenged politically by conflicts in four main areas: electoral systems, legislative bodies, the courts and mass media. The extent to which they may be successful in meeting these challenges will depend on their capacity to process these conflicts within democratic parameters. Latin American populisms suggest heterogeneous interpretations for which Morlino's typology could complement a critical political framework of analysis. However, as Morlino (2019, 122-123) concludes, "it is impossible to find a 'recipe' that can be applied in a wide range of cases: there is no set of recommendations that 'fits everyone'."

Conclusions

Among the political theories that embody negative views of populism, the institutionalist approach championed by Anglo-Saxon and European scholars that tend to classify regimes based on the ideal of liberal democracy is predominant. However, these approaches often fail to integrate social history with the system of actors and their strategies for exercising political power in the realms of state and society. Canovan (1999, 2) warns against oversimplification when analysing the political roots of populism: "(T)he sources of populism lie not only in the social context that supplies the grievances of any particular movement, but are to be found in tensions at the heart of [a complex] democracy."

According to the liberal tradition of democracy, democracies seek to form legitimate governments through elections and defend the interests of republican institutions through the party system. This approach leads to two paradigms put forward by the dominant democratic theory: minimalist democracy, which meets the essential basic criteria of the liberal democratic model; and elitist democracy, which highlights the technical, educational, and professional quality of the popular representatives. Both paradigms defy any categorisation that encompasses democratic ideals, such as "popular democracy" or "participatory democracy".

The Anglo-Eurocentric approach mainly focuses on the negative effects produced by conservative populism on a global scale. Jan-Werner Müller (2016, 101) argues that populism is at its core a rejection of pluralism. "[Populists] claim that they and they alone represent the people and their true interests [...] through a moral representation of the people, creating an authoritarian state that excludes all those not considered part of the proper 'people'". In other words, they claim to speak exclusively for "the silent majority" or "real people", but their analysis is ambiguous vis-à-vis the theoretical challenges posed by progressive populisms.

More positive perspectives on progressive populism are inspired by unorthodox theories and modes of critical thinking that are based on a complex vision of democracy in the Global South that transcends the more traditional model of liberal democracy. Latin American populisms invent original political practices to democratize national governments, and they redefine the fundamental categories on which democratic regimes are based: popular sovereignty; the imaginary of the nation-state; the participation of actors in diverse gender categories in the construction of public space; and the role of the state in regulating conflicts between private and public interests.

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